

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

NO. 66. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 1870.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## VERONICA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE."  
IN FIVE BOOKS.

### BOOK V.

#### CHAPTER III. MRS. PLEW.

"An illustrious house, sir!" the vicar was saying, as Maud entered. "A family renowned in the history of their country. My wife was a scion of a nobler stock than any of these bucolic squires and squires who patronised and looked down upon the vicar's lady!"

Mr. Plew was standing with his hat in one hand and his umbrella in the other, beside the fire-place, and opposite to the vicar's chair. Maud had already seen him several times; but looking at him now with the governess's words ringing in her ears, she perceived that he was altered. There was the impress of care and suffering on his pale face. Mr. Plew was, on the whole, a rather ridiculous-looking little man. His insignificant features and light blue eyes were by no means formed to express tragic emotions. He had, too, a provincial twang in his speech, and his tongue had never acquired a bold and certain mastery over the letter h. Nevertheless, more intrinsically ignoble individuals than Benjamin Plew have been placed in the onerous position of heroes, both in fact and fiction.

"How do you do, Miss Desmond?" said he.

Maud gave him her hand. His was ungloved, and its touch was cold as ice. The vicar had abruptly ceased speaking when Maud came into the room. But after a short pause, he resumed what he had been saying, with a rather superfluous show of not having been in the least disconcerted by her entrance.

"The family of—the late baronet have shown themselves entirely willing to receive her with every respect. Sir Matthew called upon her, and so forth. But she will have no need of people of that stamp. The prince's position is in all respects very different to that of these parvenus."

Mr. Plew stood bravely to listen, though with a dolorous visage. Maud was silent. The vicar's tone pained her inexpressibly. It was overbearing, triumphant, and yet somewhat angry; the tone of a man who is contradicting his better self.

"If," said Mr. Plew, without raising his eyes from the ground, "if Miss Le—if Veronica is happy and contented, and put right with the world, we shall all have reason to be truly thankful. She must have gone through a great deal of suffering."

"She gone through a great deal of suffering!" cried the vicar, with a swift change of mood. "And what do you suppose her suffering has been to compare with mine, sir? We shall all have reason to be thankful! *We!* Understand that no one can associate himself with my feelings in this matter; no one! Who is it that can put his feelings in comparison with mine!"

Maud glanced up quickly at Mr. Plew, fearing that he might resent this tone. But the surgeon showed neither surprise nor anger. He passed his hand once or twice across his bald forehead like a man in pain; but he said no word. The vicar proceeded for some time in the same strain. Had any one ever suffered such a blow as he had suffered? He, a gentleman by birth and breeding—a man of sensitive pride and unblemished honour! Had not his life, passed among stupid peasants and unculti-

vated country squires, been dreary enough all these years, but this misery and disgrace must come to crush him utterly? Maud was trembling, and distressed beyond measure. Mr. Plew remained passive. Presently the vicar, who had been walking about the room, ceased speaking; and, throwing himself into a chair, he covered his eyes with his hands.

Then Mr. Plew turned to Maud, and said, "Miss Desmond, I am glad you came in before I went away; for I came chiefly to see you. I have a message to deliver to you from my mother."

He spoke quite quietly, only his face betrayed the agitation and pain which the vicar's tirade had caused him.

"A message from Mrs. Plew? What is it?" said Maud, trying to echo his steady tone.

"My mother hopes you will excuse the liberty she takes in asking you, but she is almost entirely unable to go out now. Very often she can't get as far as the church for weeks together. As she cannot go to see you, will you come to see her, Miss Desmond? It will be a charitable action."

"Surely I will, if she wishes it."

"She does wish it. Poor soul! she has not many pleasures, and makes, of course, no new friends. The sight of your kind face would do her good."

"When shall I come?"

"Would you drink tea with her this evening? I will see you safe home."

"I don't know whether—" Maud was beginning hesitatingly, when the vicar interposed.

"Go, go, Maudie," he said. "I see that you are hesitating on my account. But I would rather that you went, my child. I shall be busy this evening."

Thus urged, Maud consented, promising to be at Mr. Plew's cottage by six o'clock. And then the surgeon took his leave. Maud was surprised to see the vicar shake hands with him, and bid him good-bye, as unconcernedly as though no harsh or unpleasant word had passed his lips. But as she walked to Mr. Plew's cottage that evening with Joanna, Maud learned from the lips of the old servant that it was no new thing for her guardian to be what Joanna called "crabby" with Mr. Plew.

"Lord bless you, Miss Maudie, don't I know, don't I see it all, think ye? I'm old enough to be your grandmother, Miss Maudie, my dear. And you mark my words, that little man, for all his soft ways, and bein' in some respects but a poor cree-

tur, he's gone through a deal for the vicar. He has his own troubles, has Mr. Plew, and it isn't for me to say anything about them. But I do declare as I never see any mortal bear with another as he bears with the vicar, except it was a woman, of course, you know, Miss Maudie. A woman 'll do as much for them as she's fond of. But to see his patience, and the way he'd come evening after evening, whenever his sick folk could spare him, and talk, or be talked to, and never say a word about himself, but go on letting the vicar fancy as he was the worst used and hardest put upon mortal in the world—which the poor master, he seemed to take a kind of pride in it, if you can make that out, Miss Maudie. Lord bless you, my dear, it was for all the world like a woman! For a man in general won't have the sense to pretend a bit, even if he loves you ever so!"

Mrs. Plew received Maud with many demonstrations of gratification at her visit, and many apologies for having troubled her to come and spend a dull evening with a lonely old woman. Mrs. Plew was rather like her son in person, mild-eyed, fair and small. She was somewhat of an invalid, and sat all day long, sewing or knitting, in her big chair, and casting an intelligent eye over the household operations of the little orphan from the workhouse, who was her only servant. She wore a big cap, with a muslin frill framing her face all round, and a "front" of false hair, which resembled nothing so much, both in colour and texture, as the outside fibres of a cocoa-nut. Maud could scarcely repress a smile as she looked at the meek figure before her, and recalled Miss Turtle's grandiloquent comparisons. The surgeon was not able to be at home for tea. His portion of home-made cake, and a small pot of strawberry jam, were put ready for him on a small round table, covered with a snow-white cloth. The little servant was instructed to keep the kettle "on the boil," so that when her master should return, a cup of hot, fragrant tea should be prepared for him without delay.

"There," said Mrs. Plew, contemplating these arrangements, "that'll be all nice for Benjy. He likes strawberry jam better than anything you could give him. I always have some in the house."

Maud felt that it was somehow right and characteristic that Mr. Plew should be fond of strawberry jam, although she would have been puzzled to say why. Then the old woman sat down with a great web of

worsted knitting in her hand, and began to talk. Her talk was all of her son. What "Benjy" said, and did, and thought, furnished an inexhaustible source of interest to her life.

"Ah, I wish I'd known more of *you* in days past, Miss Desmond, love," which Mrs. Plew invariably pronounced *loove*. "Well, well, bygones are bygones, and talking mends nothing." Mrs. Plew paused, heaved a deep sigh, and proceeded.

"To-day Benjy went to the vicarage to ask you here, and, when he came back, I saw in his face that minute that he had been upset. 'Anything wrong at Shipley Vicarage, Benjy,' I said. 'No, mother,' says he. 'I'll tell you by-and-bye.' With that he went upstairs into his own room. I heard his step on the boards overhead; and then all was as still as still, for better than an hour. After that, he came down and stood, with his hat on ready to go out, at the door of the parlour. And he said, 'There's good news for Mr. Levincourt, mother.' And then he told me—what I have no need to tell *you*, love, for you know it already. And as soon as he'd told it he went out. And do you know, Miss Desmond, that for all he kept his face in shadow, and spoke quite cheerful, I could see that he'd—he'd been shedding tears. He had indeed, love!"

"Oh, Mrs. Plew."

"Aye, it is dreadful to think of a grown man crying, my dear. But it was so. Though I never set up to be a clever woman, there's no one so sharp as me to see the truth about my son. If ever you're a mother yourself, you'll understand that, love. Well, I sat and pondered, after he was gone. And I thought to myself, 'well now this one thing is certain; *she's* far and away out of his reach for evermore. And now, perhaps, that things have turned out so, that there's no need for any one to fret and pine about what's to become of her, it may be that Benjy will put his mind at rest, and pluck up a spirit, and think of doing what I've so long wanted him to do.'"

Maud knew not what to say. She felt ashamed for Veronica before this man's mother, as she had not yet felt ashamed for her. At length she faltered out, "What is it that you wish your son to do, Mrs. Plew?"

"Why, to marry, my dear young lady; I ain't one of those mothers that wants their children to care for nobody but them. It isn't natural nor right. If my Benjy could but have a good wife, to take care of him when I am gone, I should be quite happy."

The recollection of Miss Turtle came into Maud's mind, and she said, impulsively (blushing violently the moment the words were out), "I saw Mrs. Meggitt's governess this afternoon."

Mrs. Plew had put on her spectacles to see her knitting, and she glanced over them at Maud with her pale blue eyes, half surprised, half pleased.

"To be sure! Miss Turtle. She's a very good young woman, is Miss Turtle. I'm sure she has been very kind and attentive to me, and it don't make me the less grateful, because I see very well that *all* the kindness is not for my sake. I suppose she spoke to you of Benjy?"

"Yes."

"Ah, to be sure she would! She's very fond of Benjy, is Miss Turtle, poor thing."

"Does—does Mr. Plew like her?" asked Maud, timidly.

"Oh yes, Miss Desmond, love, he *likes* her. He don't do more than like her at present I'm afraid. But that might come, if he would but make up his mind."

"Miss Turtle seems very fond of you, ma'am," said Maud, involuntarily recalling the "Mother of the Gratchy."

"Why I do believe she likes me, poor little thing. She talks a bit of nonsense now and again, about my being so noble-minded and devoted to my son. And once she said, that if she was in my place, she was sure that she could never have the sparkling virtue to give up his affections to another woman, be she ten times his wife."

"The—the what virtue?"

"Sparkling, I think she said. But my hearing is treacherous at times. But, la, my love, that's only her flummery. She means no harm. And she's good-tempered, and healthy, and industrious, and— Look here, Miss Desmond, love," continued the old woman, laying her withered hand on Maud's arm, and lowering her voice mysteriously; "you have heard Miss Turtle talk. Any one can see with half an eye how fond she is of Benjy. She makes no secret of it. Now, if, whenever you've a chance to speak to Benjy—I know he goes to the vicarage pretty well every day—if you would just say a word for poor Miss Turtle, and try to advise him like—"

"Oh, Mrs. Plew, how could I do such a thing? I am not old enough, nor wise enough, to take the liberty of offering my advice to Mr. Plew, especially on such a subject."

"But I don't want you to say it plain right out, you know. Just drop a word

here, and a word there, now and again, in favour of Miss Turtle. Won't you, now? Benjy thinks a deal of what you say."

Thus the old woman prattled on. By-and-bye Mr. Plew's step was heard on the gravel path outside. And his mother hastily whispered to Maud a prayer that she would not say a word to "Benjy" about the confidence she had been making. Then the surgeon came in, and had his tea at the side table. And they all sat and chatted softly in the twilight. It was such a peaceful scene; the little parlour was so clean and fragrant with the smell of dried lavender; the scanty, old-fashioned furniture shone with such a speckless polish; the clear, evening sky was seen through window-panes as bright as crystal, and the little surgeon and his mother looked the embodiment of cozy domestic comfort. How strange it was, Maud thought, to consider Mr. Plew in the light of an object of romantic attachment. Strange, too, to think of his being a victim to hopeless love. He ate his strawberry jam with as quiet a relish as though the beautiful Veronica Levincourt had never dazzled his eyes, or made his pulse beat quickly. Surely it would be good for him to have a kind little wife to take care of him!

When she was walking home through the Shipley lanes with Mr. Plew, Maud endeavoured to lead the conversation on to the subject of Miss Turtle's merits. Mr. Plew, however, replied absently and monosyllabically to her shyly-uttered remarks. At length, as they neared the vicarage, Mr. Plew stood still. He took off his hat so as to let the evening air blow on his forehead, and looked up at the transparent sky, wherein a few stars twinkled faintly.

"Miss Desmond," he said, "I have not had an opportunity of saying a word to you since this morning. I should not have mentioned *her* to you had not the vicar told me that you went to see her in London. It was very good of you to see her. God bless you for it, Miss Desmond!"

This was so unexpected that Maud could find no word to say in reply.

"How was she looking? Is she changed?"

"Very little changed, I think; certainly not less beautiful."

"And did you see—the—the—man she is going to marry?"

"No."

"Did she speak of him to you? Look here, Miss Desmond, you need not be afraid to talk to me of Veronica freely and

openly. I understand your kindness and delicacy. You think, perhaps, that it might pain me to hear certain things. But, indeed, to think that she will be happy gives me great comfort. I am not selfish, Miss Desmond."

"I think that you are most unselfish, most generous, and it only pains me very much to think of your goodness being unappreciated."

Maud spoke with warmth, and a tear came into her eye. She was remembering the vicar's harsh, unfeeling behaviour in the morning.

"Oh, you praise me a great deal too highly," said Mr. Plew, looking at her with genuine surprise. "The fact is that I always knew Veronica to be far above me. I never had any real hope, though I—I— Sometimes she liked to talk to me, and I was fool enough to fancy for a moment— But that was not her fault, you know. She could not be held responsible for my vanity. When she went away," he pursued in a low voice, almost like one talking to himself, "I thought at first that I had got a death-blow. For weeks I believe I did not rightly know what I was saying and doing. I suppose there was some kind of instinct in me that kept me from doing anything wild or outrageous enough to get me locked up for a madman. But at the worst, my grief was more for her than myself: it was, as true as God's in Heaven! I'm not a fierce man by nature, but if I could have got hold of—that villain, I would have killed him with no more compunction than you'd crush a viper. But any man that marries her and treats her well, there's nothing I wouldn't do to serve him—nothing! All love is over for me. I know my own shortcomings, and I blame no one. But *she* was the first and the last. I know my poor mother wants me to marry. But it can't be, Miss Desmond. I'm sorry for her disappointment, poor soul! I try to be good to her. She has been a very good mother to me, bless her! If it had been possible for Veronica to come back free, and to have held out her hand to me, I couldn't have taken it. She could never be the same woman I loved any more. But neither can I love any other. I dare say you don't understand the feeling. I cannot explain it to myself. Only I know it is so, and must be so, for as long as I have to live." Then suddenly breaking off, and looking penitently at Maud, he said, "Oh forgive me, Miss Desmond! I boasted of not being selfish, just now, and here I am



wearying you with talk about myself. I hope you'll excuse it. The truth is, I have no one that I can speak to about her. I dare not say to the vicar what I have said to you. And of course I don't put forward my trouble, when he has so much of his own to bear. I was led on to talk almost unawares. You listen so patiently and quietly. Here we are at the garden gate. Shall I come up the pathway? There is Joanna at the door. Good night, Miss Desmond."

Maud's eyes were so blurred with tears that she did not at first perceive that old Joanna had hastened to the door in order to be the first to give her a letter which she now held up triumphantly as Maud entered.

"A letter, Miss Maudie! One as you'll be glad to have!"

It was from Hugh. Maud took it, and ran to her own room to enjoy her treasure.

After a few fond lover's words of greeting, the first that her eye lighted on were these: "I have had a long interview with Lady Gale."

#### CHAPTER IV. AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

"I HAVE had a long interview with Lady Gale."

It was a minute or so before Maud recollected Veronica's announced intention of bestowing a marriage portion on her, and of speaking to Hugh on the subject. But Maud had warned her not to expect that Hugh would yield. And yet Veronica had persisted in her intention. It was, doubtless, in order to fulfil it that she had sought Hugh. The further perusal of her letter confirmed this supposition. Maud might, of course, have satisfied her mind at once as to the correctness of her guess; but, instead of doing so, she had sat for a minute or two, letter in hand, vaguely wondering and supposing—a waywardness of mind that most people have occasionally experienced under similar circumstances.

"I told her that it could not be," wrote Hugh; "that I knew you had already answered for yourself, and that I must entirely approve and confirm your answer. Was not that right, dearest? She tried, when her first attempt had failed, to take a different tone, and to tell me that it was *right* and just that you should have a portion of the wealth left by Sir John Gale. She even said a word about the duty of carrying out her late husband's intentions! Think of that, Maudie! But I took the liberty of pointing out to her, that if *that*

were her object, she must make over every farthing to you without loss of time, since it was clear that Sir John Gale had never intended that any portion of his wealth should be enjoyed by *her*. I don't think she is used to such plain speaking, and she looked mightily astonished."

That was all in the letter relating to Veronica, except a word at the end. "I forgot to say that her ladyship did me the honour to make me a confidence. She informed me that she was to be married to Prince Barletti almost immediately. For obvious reasons the marriage would be quite quiet. I saw the said prince; not an ill-looking fellow, although there is something queer about his eyes. Veronica told me that Sir Matthew Gale had consented to remain in town in order to give her away! I had a strong impression that she was telling me all this in order that it might be communicated to you, and by you to Mr. Levincourt. Oh, my sweet, pure Maudie, what a perfume of goodness seems to surround you! Only to think of you, after being with that woman, refreshes one's very soul."

Maud ran down-stairs, after reading her letter through, to communicate to the vicar that part of it which related to his daughter. But Mr. Levincourt was not within. It was past nine o'clock, yet Joanna said that it was very likely her master would not be at home for another hour or more.

"Do you know where he is?" asked Maud.

"I don't know for certain, Miss Maudie," said the old woman, drily; "but I'd lay a wager he's at Meggitt's. He hasn't been there yet, since you've come back. But, for better than three months before, he's been there constant, evening after evening. They're no fit company for such a gentleman as master, farmer folks like them. I wonder what he can find in them! But they flatter him and butter him up. And Mrs. Meggitt, she goes boasting all over Shipley how thick her and hers is with the vicar. Good Lord! if men ben't fools in some things!"

"Hush, Joanna; you must not speak so. The vicar knows better than you or I either, where it is proper and fit for him to go."

But although she thus rebuked the old servant, Maud did not, in her heart, like this new intimacy. It was part of the general lowering, she had already noticed, in the vicar's character.

She sat down alone in the parlour to re-

read her dear letter. There was but little news in it. Hugh was well; was working hard; and although he had not yet succeeded in finding the necessary money for the purchase of the business in Daneshire, he by no means despaired of doing so. His mother sent her fond love to Maud, and missed her sadly. The remainder of the epistle was full of words of the fondest and warmest affection. They were very precious and interesting to Maud, but would scarcely be deemed so by the reader.

It may as well be mentioned here that Maud was in ignorance of Mr. Frost's debt to Hugh. He had debated with himself whether he should or should not make her acquainted with it; and he had decided in the negative, perceiving that it would be impossible to do so without revealing his mother's story, and that he conceived he had no right to do without her permission.

Maud sat and read, and re-read her letter. And then she took out the little plain wooden desk she had used as a child, and set herself to begin an answer to it. More than an hour passed thus. It was half-past ten o'clock, and still no vicar!

Maud at last began to think that Mr. Levincourt might prefer not to find her sitting up on his return. She had an instinctive feeling that he would a little shrink from saying to her that he had been passing his evening at Farmer Meggitt's. He had never yet, in speaking with her, alluded to the growth of his intimacy with the farmer's family. With this feeling in her mind, she resolved to write out the words about Veronica's marriage, stating that she copied them from Hugh's letter, and to lay the paper on the table, so that the vicar could not fail to see it when he should come in. Just as she had finished her task he returned.

"You up still, Maud!" said he. "Why did you not go to bed?" He spoke with a sharp, querulous tone, very unusual with him when addressing his ward, and made no allusion as to where he had been. Maud was glad that she had written what the vicar had to learn. She slipped the paper into his hand, kissed his forehead, and ran quickly up to bed.

The next morning the vicar was as bland as usual, perhaps a trifle more bland than he had been for a long time. He asked Maud how she had passed the evening at Mr. Plew's, and seemed quite amused by her account of Mrs. Plew's anxiety that her son should marry.

"That little Miss Turtle, hey? Ha, ha,

ha! How absurd it seems to look upon Plew in the light of an object of hopeless attachment! There is an incongruity about it that is deliciously ridiculous."

"I think," said Maud, rather gravely, "that Mr. Plew well deserves to be loved. He is very kind and unselfish."

"Oh, yes, child. That of course. That is all very true. There is a great deal of home-spun, simple goodness of heart about poor Plew. But that does not prevent his being extremely comic when considered in a romantic point of view. But you're a wee bit matter-of-fact, Maudie. You don't quite perceive the humour of the thing. Which of our modern writers is it who observes that women very rarely have a sense of humour? Well, why in the world don't Plew marry little Miss Turtle? Upon my word I should say it would do admirably!"

"I'm afraid—I think that Mr. Plew is not in love with Miss Turtle, Uncle Charles."

"My dear Maudie! How can you be so intensely—what shall I say?—solemn? The idea of a "grande passion" between a Plew and a Turtle is too funny!"

"I think, Uncle Charles," said Maud, resolutely, and not without a thrill of indignation in her voice, "I do believe that, absurd as it may seem, Mr. Plew has felt a true and great passion; that he feels it still; and that he will never overcome it as long as he lives."

For one brief instant the vicar's face was clouded over by a deep, dark frown—a frown not so much of anger as of pain. But almost immediately he laughed it off, stroking Maud's bright hair as he had been used to do when she was a child, and saying, "Pooh, pooh, little Maudie! Little soft-hearted, silly Maudie, thinks that because *she* has a true lover all the rest of the world must be in love too! Set your mind at rest, little Goldielocks. And—go whenever you can to that poor old woman. It will be but charitable. Don't think of me. I have occupations, and duties, and—besides I must learn to do without your constant companionship, Maudie. I cannot have you always with me. Don't mope here on *my* account, my dear child. And to visit the sick and aged is an act, positively, of Christian duty."

Again Maud had the painful perception of something hollow in all this; and the sense of being ashamed of the perception. The suspicion would force itself on her mind that the vicar purposely shut his eyes

to the truth of what she had said of Mr. Plew; and, moreover, that in urging her not to stay at home on his account, her guardian was providing against her being a check on his full liberty to pass his own time how and with whom he pleased. Mr. Levincourt said no word about the contents of the written paper Maud had given him. And at the close of the above recorded conversation he rose and took his hat, as though about to go out according to his custom after breakfast.

"Uncle Charles!" cried Maud, in a low, pleading voice, "you have not said anything—did you read the paper I gave you last night?"

"Yes, oh yes, I read it, thank you, my dear child. I—I was not wholly unprepared to hear that the marriage would take place so soon. In—my daughter's letter to me—she said—justly enough—that there was no real reason for a very long delay."

Then the vicar sauntered out of the house, and down the long gravel walk, with as unconcerned an air as he could assume.

"He seems not to care!" thought Maud, with sorrowful wonder. "He seems to care so much less than he did about every thing!"

"Master was at Meggitt's last night, Miss Maudie," said Joanna, as she cleared away the breakfast things. This was not her usual task. Catherine, the younger maid, habitually performed it; and indeed, Joanna very seldom now left her own domain of the kitchen. But it seemed that on this occasion she had come up-stairs purposely to say those words to Maud. "Yes, he *were*," she repeated doggedly, provoked at Maud's silence, and changing the form of her affirmation as though she conceived emphasis to be in an inverse ratio to grammar.

"Well, Joanna?"

"Oh, very well, of course, Miss Maudie. It's all right enough, I dare say. Bless your sweet face!" added the old woman, with sudden compunction at her own ill-humour, "I'm pleased and thankful as you'll have a good husband to take care of you, and a house of your own to go to, my dearie. It was real pretty of you, to tell old Joanna all about it when you came back. 'Tis the best bit of news I've heard this many a long day."

Catherine coming into the room at this juncture (much surprised to see herself forestalled in her duty), began with youthful indiscretion to announce that she had just seen Mrs. Meggitt at the "general shop";

and that Mrs. Meggitt was as high and saucy as high and saucy could be; and that folks did say— She was, at this point, ignominiously cut short by Joanna; who demanded sternly what she meant by gossiping open-mouthed before her betters. She was further informed that some excuse might be made for her ignorance, as not having had the advantage of having lived with "county families!" not but what she might have picked up a little manners, serving as she did, a real gentleman like the vicar, and a real, right-down, thoroughbred lady like Miss Maudie! And was finally sent down-stairs, somewhat indignant, and very much astonished.

Maud was pained and puzzled by all this. And her mind dwelt more and more on the change she observed in her guardian. There was only one person (always saving and excepting Hugh! But then Hugh was far away. And besides her great endeavour was to make her letters to him cheerful; and not to add to his cares), there was but one to whom she could venture to hint at this source of trouble.

The friend in whom she could unhesitatingly confide with was Mrs. Sheardown; and Maud longed for an opportunity of talking with her. But here again, things had become different during her more than twelve months' absence from Shipley. The vicar had withdrawn himself from the Sheardowns, as he had withdrawn himself from other friends and acquaintances. The captain and his wife still came to St. Gildas, but Joanna said it was nearly three months since they had set foot within the vicarage; and the master never went to Lowater. Maud had seen her kind friends at church. They had greeted her on leaving St. Gildas with all their old warmth of affection; and Mrs. Sheardown had said some word about her coming to Lowater so soon as the vicar could spare her. But they had not been to the vicarage, nor had Maud thought it right to offer to leave her guardian alone so soon after her return. Now, however, she yearned so much for the sweetness of Nelly Sheardown's womanly sympathy, and the support of Nelly Sheardown's womanly sense, that she sent off a note to Lowater House, asking what day she might go over there, as she longed to see and speak with its dear master and mistress. A reply came back as quickly as it was possible for it to come. This was the answer:

DARLING MAUD. How sweet of you not to mistrust us! We have not been to see

you, dear girl, but the wherefores (various) must be explained when we meet. Come on Saturday and sleep. We will bring you back when we drive in to church the next day, if it needs must be so. Tom and Bobby send you their best—(Bobby amends my phrase. He insists on *very* best)—love. Present our regards to the vicar.

Ever, dear Maud,

Your loving friend,  
N. S.

This was on Monday. Maud easily obtained the vicar's permission to accept Mrs. Sheardown's invitation.

"Oh, certainly," he said. "Go by all means. It would be hard to expect you to give up your friends and share the loneliness of my life."

The fact was that the vicar's life was not lonely. Maud, as she thought of the companions he chose, and the society he had voluntarily abandoned, felt that a lonely life would have been better for her guardian than that which he led. However, she looked forward eagerly to her visit to Lo-water.

But before the appointed Saturday arrived, an event happened which put everything else out of Maud's mind for awhile. She had been out one morning, visiting some poor sick people in the village, and her way homeward lying in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Plew's cottage, she had called there, to have a chat with the old lady. It was rather later than she had intended when she left Mrs. Plew's; and she hastened home fearing to be late for the two o'clock dinner. When she reached the vicarage, the house-door stood ajar. That was no new thing. Maud entered quietly and looked into the dining-room. There was no one there, nor in the parlour. Her guardian had not yet come in, then. The house was very silent. She called Joanna. No one answered, and there was no sound of voices in the kitchen. Maud ran down-stairs, and found the kitchen empty; but through the lattice window she saw Joanna, Catherine, and Joe Dowsett, the groom, apparently in eager conversation. They were standing beside the stable door at some distance from the house.

"Joanna," called Maud. "Is it not dinner time? Where is Mr. Levincourt?"

"Lord a mercy, there's Miss Maudie!" cried Joanna, as excitedly as though the young girl's apparition was of the most unexpected and tremendous nature. Then she hobbled quickly up to the kitchen

door, where Maud stood, followed by Catherine.

"Is anything the matter?" asked Maud.

"Not a bit on it, Miss Maudie. Don't ye be flustered. Only the master's not coming home to dinner. He's gone to Shipley Magna."

"To Shipley Magna!"

"Yes: here's Joe Dowsett as'll tell you all about it. Joe, Joe, come here! And who do you think, Miss Maudie, my dear, is at the Crown Inn there?"

"At the Crown Inn? What do you mean?"

"Why, Miss Veronica! At least Miss Veronica as was. And her new husband."

### BYEGONE CANT.

WHAT is cant? we ask our informant; as a beginning. (We know it is what we call "Slang" in our own day; but we ask him.)

Cant—he answers; from a fading, brown-stained, yellow page; in attenuated, pallid lettering—is gibberish; pedler's French. And there he dismisses the subject as too insignificant for more attending to. Probing him a little further (if only for vexation), we elicit from him that to cant is to talk after the manner of gipsies and rogues; said gentry being—as far as they were gipsies—a crew of pilfering stragglers, pretending, under pretence of being Egyptians (whence, of course, their rubbed-down title), to tell people's fortunes; and being—as far as they were rogues—villains also, and knaves, and cheats, and sturdy beggars. A nice set of folks, truly, to maim, and cripple, and overlay the English of King George the Second! And they would not call to cant to cant, either! It became with these pedler's Frenchmen, these gibberish-utterers, to stamflesh; and so a new tongue might be created by them, and we might stand by, and have no understanding of a word!

Of a word, did we say? Nay. A word was altered into a whid—as spermaceti was mouthed into par-ma-ce-ti by the fine lord who enraged Hotspur; and if our friends had required us to speak warily, they would have cried out, "Stow your whids!" and have looked blackly enough, if we had not had comprehension. With what would they have looked? Their eyes? Oh! dear no! Their ogles! That is how they would have put it. And pos-



sibly we might have seen a shake from an evil-looking nab (a head); might have been treated with a kick from an angry stamp (a leg); and might have been told we had made a panter (a heart) leap much quicker than it need have done if we had only learned how, fitly, to hold our prating-cheat (our tongue).

And were there many of these rogues, these gipsies, who manufactured pedler's French, and spluttered gibberish? Yes; they abounded. We live, says our informant, in a thieving, cheating, plundering age. Cozening is become a topping trade, only we have got a genteeler way of stealing now than only to take a man's horse from under him on the highway, and a little loose money out of his pocket; our rapparees are men of better breeding and fashion, and scorn to play at such small game; they sweep away a noble estate with one slight brush, and bid both the gallows and horse-pond defiance: and the mob is not always just in this point, for one pickpocket deserves a horse-pond as well as another, without any regard to quality or fine clothes. And if our informant is not, in all this, a *Français à la Pedler* and a gibberdoon himself, we will undertake to translate every word of him into purer English! He says, also, that when great rogues are in authority, and have the laws against oppression and robbery in their own hands, little thieves only go to pot for it: and here again, no doubt, he thinks he has turned a pretty expression, and may be complimented on the gracefulness of his language! According, indeed, to stamflesh, or cant, he might congratulate himself on having issued a clincher (a word not yet quite out of usage); and he might offer to draw his tilter (his sword), or give a job (a guinea), if in all Rumville (London) any one should dare to contradict him. Which testimony of his, as to the innocence and mutual trust, and well-tasting probity of the "good old times," is borne out, too. And by respectable authority. Tobias Smollett, M.D. (sleeping under vines and citrons, and near the chirp of the cicada, in pale Leghorn), has something to say about it; William Cowper, Esq., of the Inner Temple, has a little more. The doctor's words are:

"England was at this period infested with robbers, assassins, and incendiaries . . . Thieves and robbers were now become more desperate and savage than ever they had appeared since man was civilised. In the exercise of their rapine, they wounded,

maimed, and even murdered the unhappy sufferers, through a wantonness of barbarity. They circulated letters, demanding sums of money from certain individuals, on pain of reducing their houses to ashes, and their families to ruin."

And Cowper, touching another kind of villainy abroad, writes:

But when a country (one that I could name)  
In prostitution sinks the sense of shame;  
When infamous venality, grown bold,  
Writes on his bosom, *to be let or sold*;  
When perjury, that Heaven-defying vice,  
Sells oaths by tale, and at the lowest price;  
Stamps God's own name upon a lie just made,  
To turn a penny in the way of trade;  
When avarice starves (and never hides his face)  
Two or three millions of the human race,

then may gone-by nations

Cry aloud, in every careless ear,  
Stop while you may; suspend your mad career.

Yes. For, within the life-time of those with whom Cowper lived, an earl, the Earl of Macclesfield, and the Lord High Chancellor of England, was committed to the Tower for embezzlement! In the house of the king's faithful Commons, Sir George Oxenden had declared that the crimes and misdemeanors of his lordship were many; and these appearing to be that he had embezzled the estates and effects of many widows, orphans, and lunatics, besides selling the offices in his gift, and being guilty of various other irregularities, he was condemned, after a twenty days' trial, to pay a fine of thirty thousand pounds; and he was kept in safe custody for the six weeks that sufficed for his people to collect the money. Then Sir Robert Walpole, with his accredited maxim that every man had his price, was yet in people's mouths; and many elections had to be inquired into, notably that of Westminster, in connexion with which the high-sheriff was taken into custody, and some army officers who had acted under him, and some justices of the peace, had to receive a reprimand from the before-mentioned faithful Commons, and to go down on their knees at the bar of the house to hear it.

All very sad really. All almost enough to make us take a rattler (a coach) some darkmans (night), and drive to a country where the ruffian (his Satanic majesty) is not so present, and where we could live peety (cheerful), without the fear of every old Mr. Gory (piece of gold money) we had, and every witcher-bubber (silver bowl), being nabbed (stolen) from us by the first prig who chose to clutch us deftly about the nub (neck)!

But was there nothing done to this

mighty army of malefactors or maledictors, called otherwise, in contemporary literature, blades, make-bates, cuffs, highflyers, bloods, bucks, smarts, frubbles, bravoos, and so forth? Were there no prisons for them? Oh yes! and they had their own names for these places of their detention (to put a fine point on it), and for the men they must consort with therein, and the other objects of their surroundings. Newgate itself they called *Whit*; the sessions-house from which they would be taken there was the *nubbing-ken*; the highwaymen they would find inside, befouled, and fettered, and considerably chopfallen, were *rum-padders* (the road itself on which they performed their exploits being the *pad*); the gallows, the shadow of which was ever hanging over them, was the *nubbing-cheat*; and the executioner, whose knuckles they must surely, in imagination, have often felt far too intimate and nimble about their necks, became the *nubbing-cove*. And these prisons were full to overflowing. At "*Whit*," in consequence of the dense crowding, the air became putrid; and this putrefied air, says Smollett, adhering to the clothes of the malefactors brought to the May trials at the bar of the Old Bailey, produced, even among the audience, a pestilential fever. The lord mayor caught it and died of it; so died, also, one alderman, two of the judges, divers lawyers who attended the session, the greater part of the jury, and likewise a considerable number of the spectators.

These were the days, too, it must be recollected, when the *nubbing-cove*, the hangman, had brisk work; when he was always adjusting his rope and drop. "There are pretty orders beginning, I can tell you: it is but heading and hanging;" as Escalus warns us in *Measure for Measure*. Twenty, thirty, forty, pinioned corpses were no unusual sight for the Cockneys then. Clumpertons (country-folk), agape at the giant proportions of the still somewhat new St. Paul's, would turn from their wondering walks to shudder and shrink at the ghastly exhibition; going on afterwards to the Tower lions, or Mrs. Salmon's, with what appetite they might. For, supposing a rattling mumper (a coach beggar) should officiously help a ridge cully (a goldsmith) as he extricated himself from his sedan-chair at the porch, let us say, of Mr. Winstanley's Water Theatre at the lower end of Pickadilly; and supposing the rattling mumper should convey a massive watch from the good man's loose keeping safely

into his own. There would have been no pondering as to how much, or how little, of orderly imprisoning. Rattling mumper would simply have been hanged. And supposing a *kinchin-cove* (a little man) in sauntering the three miles of smelling cheats (gardens) between London and Hackney, should hear the *twittle-twattle* of a *cobble-colter* (a turkey), or the sagacious cackle of *tib* of the *buttery* (a goose); and supposing the said *kinchin-cove* should think a dinner off these big birds would be delicious, and should steal them for that purpose or any other. Again, short work would have been made of it, and *kinchin-cove* would simply have been hanged. Let a *squeaker*, too (a bar-boy), run off with a tempting chine of *ruff-peck* (bacon); let a *prig-napper* (a horse stealer) get possession of a roan or grey; let any insignificant vagabond appropriate a *peeper* (a looking-glass), a pair of *glym-fenders* (andirons), anything that *would* have a knack of placing itself beneath his handy hand; and Great Britain would still contain just those many inhabitants the less. Mr. Executioner would be the speedy answer to every one of them. He, like the watch known so affectionately to us, was to "comprehend all vagrom men;" was to bid them all hang, and hang completely, in the good king's name.

For which matter, are we not aware how forging, for instance, if detected, meant inevitable hanging? Do we not call to mind William Dodd, LL.D., incumbent of Winge, in Buckinghamshire, and once king's chaplain, who forged a bond in the name of his former pupil, the most noble the Earl of Chesterfield, and who lost his life for it at the gallows, precisely as if he had been an illiterate man? And do we not all think, at once, of Captain Macheath (Royal Navy, King's Dragoons, or elsewhere), who was "cast for death" by Judge Gay for various elegant and romantic misdemeanours? Though this case, after all, may not serve our purpose; since, in spite of the common hangman the gallant gentleman was condemned to, he lives green and lively, and with lappels, rapier, and peruke, brand-new, even to this very to-day. We can cite Dick Turpin, safely, however; and Jack Sheppard. They and their associates were expert at knipping a bung (picking a pocket), and at the game of bulk and file (jostling in order to rob). They were perfectly aware what was a *stalling-ken* (a house for receiving stolen goods). If inside one of them any young

stall-wimper (base-born little unfortunate), should dare to approach their majesties, claiming fraternity, however far off, in the varying grades of rascaldom, they could not have turned away as not understanding what he said. His language would have been quite familiar. And when they were all brought to the great leveller, the prison—to wit, the Whit—each would dread cly the jerc (to be whipped), each would talk of a naper of naps (a sheep-stealer), of a mow-beater (a drover, probably from moo, the sound the ill-used animal would utter), and they would all know that hanging was in store for them, and that they must fall into the hands of the nubbing-cove at last. "In a box of the stone-jug I was born;" aye, and by a tightened jugular I shall die, for, however often there may be evasion, gripping comes at last, and gripping means a settling of little hopes and aims for ever!

Another word, too, with these interesting folk was lappy (drunk). It was heard often. Intoxicating liquors were sold at the corners of all the streets; and—what the ministry cared far more for—it was sold without the payment of the duty; such duty, people said, being so extortionate, it was worth running any risk to evade. Thus, any clapper-dudgeon (beggar-born), who had held out his pen-bank (his can) successfully, over against the Royal Exchange, or in Russell-court, next the Cannon Ball, at the Surgeon's Arms, in Drury-lane, might get lappy at the end of his hard day's labour, and a dozen times over if he pleased, for the small sum of a shilling. The ministry were afraid from this that the populace would sink into a continued state of intoxication; even into the state they had been in when the retailers of the poisonous compound, gin, set up painted boards in public, inviting people to be drunk for the small expense of one penny; assuring them they might be dead drunk for twopence, and have straw to lie on for nothing! So it was proposed to bring in a bill for reducing the liquor-duties, in order that they might strictly, and with a modest face, be enforced. And the ministry carried the measure, though Lord Hervey ("men, women, and Herveys") was dead against it, and so was my Lord of Chesterfield (and of the Letters), and such quantity of bishops, that, at division, the last witty and polished nobleman was quite surprised. "How!" he cried, looking round at their reverences in a cluster near him. "Have I got on

the other side of the question? I have not had the honour to divide with so many lawn-sleeves for years!"

"I was passing the evening at Will's, in Covent Garden," Steele tells us—such evening being really a few years before our date, but practically identical—"when the cry of the bellman, 'Past two o'clock!' roused me. I went to my lodgings led by a Light, whom I put into the discourse of his private economy, and made him give me an account of the charge, hazard, profit, and loss of a family that depended upon a link, with a design to end my trivial day with the generosity of sixpence."

Well. Any one of our rogues and gipsies relating this incident would have called the link-man a Glym-Jack, and the sixpence added to his earnings a half-bord. Possibly Steele knew both the expressions; and heard them when he was "entangled at the end of Newport-street and Long-acre," or when he came to "the Pass, which is a military term the brothers of the whip have given to the strait at St. Clement's Church." He heard another piece of cant, at any rate; about which he gossips very prettily. He saw a lady visiting the fruit-shops at Covent Garden, and, after tripping into her coach, she sat in it, with her mask off, and a laced shoe just appearing on the opposite cushion, to hold her firm and in a proper attitude to receive inevitable jolts. She was a silkworm. "I was surprised," says Steele, "with this phrase; but found it was a cant with the hackney fraternity for their best customers; women who ramble twice or thrice a week from shop to shop, to turn over all the goods in town without buying anything. The silkworms are, it seems, indulged by the tradesmen."

"It is scarcely to be credited," cries Walker of the Dictionary (actor, school-master, and lecturer on elocution), and he is speaking of the second meaning to the word cant—"it is scarcely to be credited that the writer in the Spectator, signed T., should adopt a derivation of this word from one Andrew Cant, a Scotch Presbyterian minister! The Latin *cantus*, so expressive of the singing or whining tone of certain preachers, is as obvious an etymology! The cant of particular professions is an easy derivation from the same origin. It means the set phrases, the routine of professional language, resembling the chime of a song."

Does it? Well, we care not. Like Cowper, we are not

Learn'd philologists who chase  
A panting syllable through time and space;  
Start it at home, and hunt it in the dark,  
To Gaul, to Greece, and into Noah's Ark.

We would rather Steele than Walker; that is all. And though it does not alter cant words to find them in his company, it puts a halo round them.

#### A DEWDROP.

I DREAM'D that my soul was a dew-drop,  
As a dew-drop I fell to the ground;  
And here, in the hearts of the flowers,  
A grave of sweet odour I found:

But my sisters, the other drops drew me  
With them, in a silvery throng,  
To their sweet source, dancing round me,  
And, drawing me, danced me along.

Where my sisters and I went dancing,  
Gay flowers on the green banks grew;  
And the flowers I kiss'd, and with kisses  
I greeted the gold sand too:

Till down, with the brooklet, I bounded,  
On the wheel of the water-mill,  
And whirl'd it; and wander'd, and water'd,  
The thirsty young corn on the hill.

Thence, over the hill-top headlong,  
As I fell to the hollows below,  
"Here," I thought, "is the end of my journey,  
And my life, too, is ended now."

But the current drew me, and drew me,  
By forest, and dale, and down,  
And under the turrets and bridges,  
And into the roaring town.

Onward, and onward, and never  
Any moment of perfect bliss,  
And, with lips that sought love everlasting,  
I snatch'd but a fleeting kiss.

Onward, and onward, till falling  
Into the infinite main,  
In its fathomless waters I buried  
My love, and my hope, and pain.

And "here," I thought, "all ends surely,"  
As the great billow bore me away,  
"Here my spirit shall rest, and for ever,  
"From its longing, and labour, and play."

But anew to the azure of heaven  
Was my being upborne; and anew  
From the heaven to the earth I descended  
In a drop of celestial dew.

#### LOOKING FOR GUY FAWKES.

ON the morning of the fifth of November, 1605, as all the world knows, a tall, dark, suspicious-looking man, Fawkes by name, and ostensibly coal merchant by trade, was discovered by Lord Mounteagle under the Houses of Parliament in the suspicious company of a dark lantern, sundry matches, and thirty-six casks of gunpowder. The world is further aware of the ignominious end of this personage, and is annually reminded of the transaction in which he was engaged, by all the vagabonds and dirty little boys who can raise sufficient capital to construct an effigy pro-

per to the occasion. On the fifth of November, the trouble is, not so much to look for Guy Fawkes as to avoid him. On the remaining days of the year Guy Fawkes is out of season, and invisible to the eye of man. How came it, then, that on the eighth of February in this present year of grace, we found ourselves engaged in looking for Guy Fawkes?

Of all the places with which we are acquainted, in which it is easy and, as it were, a matter of course to lose one's way, the Palace at Westminster is the most intricate. All the staircases appear to be the same; there is a dimness of light in the corridors, very favourable to aimless wandering; all the courts have exactly the same look to the unpractised eye; all the snug little offices into which the wayfarer peeps, through half opened doors, are alike. They are all furnished and comfortably, with the same official table, the same official chairs, and the same blazing fires. They would all be improved by a little more window. There is an air of "attendance from eleven to three" about them all. To ask your way is a proceeding worthy only of a novice. For the inhabitants of Sir Charles Barry's elaborate puzzle differ in no respect from the inhabitants of large piles of building elsewhere. Either they really do not know their way about, or they take a malicious pleasure in concealing their knowledge from the inquiring stranger, or, knowing their way and being friendly, they are wholly unable to explain their views. Whatever the cause may be, trustworthy topographical information is scarcely obtainable. It is well to get a clear understanding with any individual with whom you have business in the remoter portions of the building, as to whereabouts you are to go, and then to set forth in the spirit of an African explorer, resolved to discover the spot with as few inquiries as possible. More embarrassment was caused us by the well meant but vague directions of a friendly policeman than by the failure of all our own unaided efforts, feeble as they were. For a considerable period this worthy official's misleading directions kept us on the move. It was not until we had penetrated, apparently, into two or three private houses, and had, on one occasion, had an opportunity of remarking the ease with which somebody's spoons might have been appropriated, that a native of this complicated region took compassion on us. This Samaritan—he was a butler and we thank him—well knew the futility of verbal



directions. Wasting no words in conversation, he personally led us to our destination. And it was well he did so, for we are firmly convinced that we should otherwise have been roaming from court to court, and along interminable dim corridors at this moment. At last, and when we had been driven almost to madness by the sound of the clock striking eleven—the hour at which we were officially due in another portion of the building—this friendly native led us to the guide we had come to seek.

This gentleman, *Æolus* by name, and ruler of the winds by profession, is ready for us, and hastily welcomes us to the chamber wherein the business connected with manufacturing fresh breezes is transacted, and which is not an imposing apartment. Time and tide and Guy Fawkes waiting, however, for no man, we once more thread the labyrinth, and make our way to the Princes' Chamber, where assemble on each occasion of the opening of the session of Parliament, the searchers after Guy Fawkes. For the gunpowder plotter has left so strong an impression on the official mind that two hundred and sixty-five years have not sufficed to eradicate it. It is considered that the bad example set in 1605 may, after more than two centuries and a half, still exercise an evil influence, in the way of blasting the Houses of Parliament into space.

We are late, and in the Princes' Chamber find the searchers assembled. The Princes' Chamber is not favoured with much more of the light of day than other portions of the building; it is dim, and looks picturesque. A band of stalwart beef-eaters in their stiff ruffs, and quaint, old-world uniforms, with new rosettes in their shoes and round their hats, light up with their bright colours that side of the Princes' Chamber on which they are posted, and do not interfere with the picturesque appearance of the place. Nor do the modern war-medals, with which in profusion their stalwart breasts are covered, nor the many-coloured ribands from which those trophies hang, detract from the artistic effect of their quaint old costumes.

That it is not given to all scarlet and gold, however, to be picturesque and effective, is sufficiently proved by certain other uniforms worn by certain other searchers, which are positively terrific in their hideousness. Scarlet coatees, golden aiguillettes, and other such decorations, are surmounted by a shako, which is a thing of monstrosity and

a horror for ever. Of an exploded style this shako; of a shape, thank Heaven, long gone by! It is broader at the top than round the head, it is bound with preposterous cords, its peak is horrible to contemplate. How can any man have invented such a shako? How can any man wear such an article, knowing how it looks upon his fellow creatures?

What are these  
So withered and so wild in their attire?

Our informant has his doubts as to their exact rank; they may be pensioners, he thinks, or they may be yeomen. He cannot say. We decide that they must be mutes; scarlet mutes accustomed to attend the funerals of deceased ceremonials; the more so as they carry truncheons of the kind borne occasionally by the preposterous funereal humbugs to whom we liken them. Of course, these staves are not so gloomy as those others, but are decorative, as becometh the wearers of scarlet and gold uniforms. Certain black-coated creatures of an inferior race (why does the civilian inevitably shrink before him who wears a red coat?) are standing around the fire. Officials some of these—you may detect them by a certain haughty air—the remainder, mere spectators desirous of assisting in the solemnity, depressed by a general feeling of inferiority and wearing propitiatory smiles. These are all under the command of one who can only be described as a *Gorgeous Personage*. In full uniform is the *Personage*. A cocked hat with waving white plumes, suggestive of field-marshal and generals, adorns his head. A sense of deep responsibility casts a gloom upon his brow. Finally, helmeted, calm, prosaic, and modern, is the *Inspector of Police*. Of course, he has us all in custody, and is even severer in his aspect than the military; of whom he appears to have a low opinion, albeit the truncheons of the scarlet mutes appear to interest him, as having some affinity with the weapons used by "the force." His presence here is obviously necessary. Has he not superseded the Bow-street runner? And was it not a Bow-street runner who, as a matter of fact, captured the original Guy Fawkes? At all events, the old song tells us how, on the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, "they sent to Bow-street for that brave old runner Townshend." It is afterwards stated, certainly:

That is they would have sent for him,  
For fear he was no starter at;  
But Townshend wasn't living then,  
He wasn't born till arter that.

Still, we prefer to decline to believe in the non-existence of Townshend in 1605.

Lanterns are served out in profusion to the searchers—even visitors may take lights if it seem good to them: a fact that may interest Mr. Lowe—but even these preparations fail to arouse the company from the meditative state into which they have hopelessly sunk. Conversation, such as there is, is carried on in whispers, or from behind furtive hands; but there is little of it, and we moodily watch the officers of the House filling the stationery cases in anticipation of the coming of the members of the legislature: which watching causes us darkly to meditate on the vast amount of sealing-wax provided for the House of Lords.

That sensation of being in church, which is apt to come over one in a strange place, in the company of silent and morose fellow-men, falls upon us by-and-bye to such an extent that when a Dignitary of the church, not wholly unconnected with the neighbouring abbey, suddenly appears, we feel that service is about to begin. But we presently perceive that the Dignitary is merely here in a civilian and amateur capacity. Compliments are affably exchanged between Dignitary, Gorgeous Personage, and High Official from Lord Chamberlain's department. The interest excited amongst beef-eaters, yeomen-pensioners, inferior officials, and the small but select body representing the general public, is unbounded. The army, the church, and the civil service take us under their joint command. "Attention!" The imposing ceremonial of the morning begins. It is pleasant to notice, as we watch the beef-eaters and the shakowearers file out of the Princes' Chamber that they have left halberds, swords, and such-like weapons behind. Our lamps are to be our only protection in the event of our lighting upon any members of the Fawkes Family. "The swords used to get between the legs," we hear, "and they were very awkward up and down the ladders." After the scarlet and gold stream has flowed out of the Princes' Chamber, the civilian members of the search party struggle after it reverentially, and with bared heads, across the House of Lords. After passing this sacred spot, two or three experienced hands proceed at the double and gain the head of the column. We are about to come into public view, we hear from a fellow-searcher whose movements we have closely followed, and those who are in front will have gone by before the people have time to laugh;

a practical though an irreverent suggestion. Public attention does not appear to be much troubled, however, by our proceedings, and, unnoticed and unjeered at, we march into the House of Commons, just as if we had bought a nice little corrupt constituency, and had a perfect right to a seat on one of the now empty green benches. On the left of the Speaker's chair is an opening in the floor. A steep ladder conducts us to the lower regions. Down we go.

As most people know, the floor of the House is perforated, and the air for the ventilation of the people's representatives is admitted from below.

This cellar, so to speak, below the House, is fitted with all sorts of devices for admitting or checking, for cooling or warming, the air as it passes through, and is of good height and perfectly open. Nothing is in it but ventilating apparatus, and a covered passage in the middle, wherein is placed a chair for the individual whose duty it is—a fearful duty; for every word said in the House can be heard down here—to regulate the atmospheric arrangements while the House is sitting. Certain recesses round the walls are occupied by oil lamps similar to those carried by the searchers. There is plenty of light, and it becomes immediately obvious to the meanest capacity that no ill-disposed person would have any chance of concealment here. Nevertheless, our beef-eaters and our shakowearers look inquisitively at the outsides of ventilating batteries which might hold a good-sized doll, and bring their lanterns to bear upon the stationary lamps with an air of deep wisdom. There is nobody here, we find, after some time (of course, to our great astonishment), and we descend to a lower depth. Here we find much the same scene, and the same solemn process is gone through all over again, and presently the procession starts once more. We chiefly traverse broad, well-lighted passages containing nothing but air; but very full of that, when we near the furnaces drawing it to the up-cast shafts. We maintain a dignified demeanour, like a parcel of humbugs as we are. Indeed, so infectious is the pretence of being engaged in some real duty which oppresses some of the beef-eaters (who are, to a man, admirable actors), that everybody becomes suspicious of everybody and everything. The Gorgeous Personage looks furtively into his cocked hat at intervals as if he expected to find a cask or two of gunpowder in it. We ourselves presently be-

come doubtful of the thumb of one of our gloves, which we are carrying in our hand, and peer into it as into a cavern; while the feeblest of the shako-wearers clearly burns with ardour to seize a lady's muff (for ladies accompany this solemn search), and to pluck out Guy Fawkes from the lining. Once, in a long passage, and in a gale of wind that does Æolus's heart good, we have a sensation. A heavy door bangs loudly, running feet are heard, a hoarse cry of "Halt!" echoes among the vaults. What is it? Have they got him? Delightful excitement! No, it is nothing; not even a Fenian. Some of the searchers are not so young as they were, and are a little blown; that's all. We wait for them (frightfully suspicious of an empty bucket that appears to have contained coke), and, when they "come up piping," after the manner of the professional gentlemen who become distressed in fights, we recommence our labours. So we go on for half an hour, always in passages, well lighted, and by thoroughfares well used by the many men employed about the building, until we emerge from beneath the House of Lords into the open air. Here, the beef-eaters, still keeping up an air of business, form into two soldierly lines, and march off steadily. The rest of the search party straggle off in various directions, a little shame-facedly. The imposing ceremony is over, and we are left blankly looking upon Æolus, feeling that we have not seen a great deal after all.

It presently appears that—as is not uncommonly the custom in this favoured land—we have been assisting at a performance of the national comedy *How Not To Do It*. For, as we have publicly looked for Guy Fawkes in all the places where he is by no means likely ever to be found, so we now institute a private search among the mysteries of Æolus's department, and find plenty of sequestered corners where the apparition of a conspirator would be by no means out of place.

The system of ventilation we find to be ingenious and elaborate, though perfectly simple; and its results are, on the whole, most satisfactory. Honourable members are not more easy to satisfy than other men, and it happens now and then that of two members sitting side by side, the one will be inconveniently hot and the other inconveniently cold. Towards the small hours, when Mr. Speaker's silk-stockinged calves (if it be not contempt of the House to speak of such solemn subjects) get a little chilly in the cold air (as will oc-

asionally happen even in a full House), and a warm tap has to be turned on, other gentlemen may now and then be observed to gasp. But it is unfortunately not possible to arrange for a different climate for every seat, and things as a rule go well enough. Of course, as obtains invariably with scientific ventilation, the simple expedient of opening a window plays old gooseberry with the arrangements. Witness the case of that noble lord who, dissatisfied with the temperature of the House of Peers, caused a window to be opened. It so happened that this window was situated immediately above the seats of the Lords Spiritual, and a great cowering and shivering of bishops followed. Probably, if the noble lord had been sitting in the same gale of wind which rustled lawn sleeves and blew gowns about, he would not have taunted the right reverend gentlemen with those satirical allusions to glass cases to which the sight of their discomfort moved him. On another occasion suffocating peeresses, condemned to a gallery and narrow passage, which forcibly remind the spectator of a ward in a convict prison, rebelled, and opened all the windows attainable. The sneezing, coughing, and wheezing, that followed among noble lords has never been equalled.

Down-stairs, among the vaults, we investigate the apparatus for supplying the Houses with fresh air; up-stairs, among the rafters, we find great furnaces drawing the vitiated air away. Here, we come upon four boilers of a second-hand appearance, and calculated, we should suppose, to blow up the Queen and all her ministers with far greater certainty than "Guy Fawkes, that prince of sinisters." Here again we come upon four new boilers, brave with all the latest improvements, and on which we find the manufacturer gazing with calm pride. Up-stairs again, we are astonished by the apparition of a railway in the roof, for the readier transport of coke; and climbing up perpendicular and smoke-begrimed ladders we find ourselves high up in a turret or smoke shaft, up which the smoke from all the west side of the building is drawn. Here, by the aid of Æolus's lantern, which he has never relinquished, we admire an ingenious apparatus for securing a strong and constant up-draught, consisting of a small screw propeller driven by steam. This contrivance can be worked, its grimy guardian tells us, at any speed, and is warranted to prove more effectual than any other means for attaining its end.

Descending once more, we come upon more furnaces; more dangerous, one would imagine, than fifty Fawkeses. The place is like the Black Country about Wolverhampton, full of sudden roaring flames and black stokers. One such furnace is celebrated, we are told, as the place where dinner for nothing may be obtained. On nearing it we speedily find the reason why. This furnace serves to ventilate the kitchen, and draws the air from that important region loaded with a strong smell of cooking; strong enough, almost, to be cut with a knife, and tinned off like Australian mutton, for exportation.

Up-stairs, down-stairs, everywhere but in my lady's chamber, we find all sorts of odd nooks and corners where the searchers should look if they look at all. There is plenty of evidence of the perfunctory nature of the ceremony just concluded. The vaults and roofs are practically in the occupation of the ventilating department, and are traversed at all hours of the night and day by busy workmen. So long as Æolus and his satellites remain true to their country, there is little need of any formal looking for Guy Fawkes, and it is difficult to see why the absurdity is kept up. But perhaps there are fees payable to somebody on the occasion? That would go a long way to account for the search. There is wonderful vitality in all official ceremonies that are nourished upon fees.

### THE AVENGERS.

I WAS riding one splendid autumn day across the region which lies between the Rocky Mountains and the Cascades, returning from the treaty ground where one of the interminable covenants of "eternal peace and amity" had been concluded between the whites and the Indians; only to be broken when a favourable opportunity presented itself. I was not then in any official capacity; I was only the guest of the United States' Indian Commissioners. We were approaching the foot hills of the Cascades, and riding through the beautiful green valleys strewn with brilliant flowers only known in our gardens, and with graceful pines and fragrant junipers. With our spirits elated by the prospect of once more tasting the delights of civilisation, we were inclined to look with a *couleur de rose* aspect on all things. Troops of gaily decked Indians galloped and curvetted through the prairies; racing and chasing, laughing

and shouting, as we spurred along. There seemed no care on their minds. Here they joined, and there, as a little glen opened in among the mountains, they left us for their home by the banks of some beautiful stream, the gurgle of whose waterfalls we could hear echoing away among the hills. Gradually they all left us, and we were alone. We were now entering the country of the friendly Indians, and before long would be within the advanced outposts of frontier civilisation: so we dismissed the troop of soldiers which had hitherto escorted us, and camped all alone that night. We rather missed the gay troop of motley soldiers and Indian warriors who had been our daily companions for weeks together, and naturally fell a-talking about the rude and easy independence of the Indian of this region. He is troubled with no house rent, nor is the honour of an assessment roll before him. His home is in the sage-brush, and when he mounts his horse at dawn of day he has all his possessions under his eye, and at night rolls himself up in his blanket with no fears of an hotel bill or livery stable charges in the morning. He lights his fire with two flints (ignorant of that mystical but indispensable internal revenue stamp which troubles his paler-faced brethren in these countries). His supper is a piece of juicy antelope steak, or perhaps he has killed a grouse, or caught some trout; or, if not—who cares!—he swallows a handful of grasshoppers, and in the summer his larder is all around him. The whites are his drovers and his merchants, and he is a thorough believer in might being right, and in the good old plan

That he shall take who has the power,  
And they shall keep who can.

An Indian came down to the river side where I was drinking, and asked me to pour a little water into his cup of parched pond-lily seed. He stirred it up with his finger, remarking as he washed it down, "Hyas kloosh muk-a-muk"—very good food! Quarrels they have among themselves, and bitter quarrels too, over the divisions of their plunder, and the certain misdemeanours of their spouses; but they are not alone in this. "Chivalrous" they are, forsooth, as chivalry goes now-a-days—dirty, ragged, and not over honourable—like certain brothers over the Rocky Mountains; and, moreover (venial offence as it may be in these latter days), they are rather given unto loot.

Politics they have, and though in the good



old times they had an hereditary limited monarchy, with a broad tinge of mediæval policy, yet since the advent of the republicans on their borders in the more civilised parts of the country, the chiefs are elected. And I can assure the reader there is as much chicanery and political engineering displayed as in the most civilised societies.

If early to bed and early to rise would only bring to the practitioner a moiety of the blessings the couplet ascribes to it, one would think that our "Digger" Indian ought to be a happy man. Little burdened with the world's goods, he is asleep by the time the sun is down, and is off again by the break of day.

On the whole, as we sat cheerily round our sage-brush camp fire that night, we came to the conclusion that the Indian's was an enviable existence, and that one of these days we would turn savage altogether, after having been half and half for the last three months. We even began to begrudge him his life. Congress had already done that, and put him on civilised "reserves." "He's a dooced sight too well off," remarked an honourable candidate for the legislature, as he carefully trimmed an inch-square chew of tobacco. "Happy! I guess he's as happy as a——" What simile he would have compared the felicity of a Digger Indian to, I know not, for just then a strange figure rode into camp. He was an Indian, mounted on a sorry nag, and, as to his garments, ragged and scanty. Though none of us could understand much of his language, yet this knight of the ragged poncho made himself very much at home, and, after giving a careless patronising nod all round, without being asked, finished the remains of our supper with the utmost suavity. He might be any age between fifteen and forty, for it was impossible to say from his appearance. He did not appear to be a native of the region, and, after some difficulty, he made us understand that he came from somewhere in the Humboldt country, in the direction of the great Salt Lake in Utah; and that he had fled from his tribe for some offence (in which the cutting of throats appeared to mingle). His enemies were on his track, and, seeing our trail, he had resolved to put himself under our protection; finally, he was going to remain with us. Now, though none of us had much objection to Indians murdering each other, yet we had no desire to be the Quixote of this ragged vagabond,

or to embroil ourselves with his countrymen. We accordingly told him, in that grandiloquent tone supposed to be necessary when addressing the savage,\* that we were going to a distant country, to a very distant country, to the setting of the sun. Whereupon we were assured that that was the *very* place he was in search of! In the morning he made himself so handy in getting up our horses (though we were every now and again troubled with a suspicion that in a fit of abstraction he might disappear during the night with our steeds, and leave us helpless in the desert), and begged so piteously to go to the "setting sun" with us, that ordinary humanity prevailed, and Sancho-Panza (as, with small regard to the plot of Cervantes, we dubbed him,) was soon recognised as a member of our party, sharing in all the honours and immunities, and doing full justice to the comestibles. Sancho so ingratiated himself that before long he became the possessor of a butcher's knife, a "hickory shirt," and an old blanket; and the first day's travel had not ended before he had paid my horse the flattering compliment of offering to swop with me. My companions were most of them Southern men, and had all a Southerner's love for the acquisition of a "nigger." They accordingly began to train Sancho in the way he should go, more especially in camp cookery. He was very willing to learn, but had great difficulty in comprehending that the frying-pan was not a spittoon, and that fat pork was not used in civilised communities to light the fire on wet mornings. One morning, after travelling about two miles on our way, he suddenly recollected that he had left his butcher's knife at the camp fire, and, lightening his horse of his blanket, rode back, telling us that he would overtake us very soon. We watched him riding over the sage-brush plain until a rising ground hid him from our sight. Slowly we jogged along, but still he never overtook us. We halted long at midday for him, and camped early; but this ragged rover of the desert we never saw again. There were men about that evening's camp fire who were not backward in hinting, amid sage winks, that Sancho had given us the slip with the little portable property he had acquired; but there were others who thought differently. Getting rather anxious about him, lest he might have missed our trail, we rode back;

\* The famous New England governor spoke in *bad English*, so that his Indian audience might understand him the better!

every moment expecting him to turn up. But he did not. The moon was up, full and bright, and we spurred silently along, each man silent with his own thoughts. I noticed, however, that we all instinctively began looking to the capping of our revolvers, and of the Henry rifles slung across our saddle-bows. We soon reached the prairie we had left in the morning, and suddenly we drew up with a start. There, was his old white horse grazing about, and, as we galloped down the slope not one hundred yards from our camp, we saw a sorry sight. There lay the body of poor Sancho, dead, and pierced with three flint-pointed arrows. We dismounted, and, rifle in hand, gazed around, but no sign of human being was to be seen, though doubtless keen eyes were glaring at us from some bush not far afield. The avengers of blood had been tracking him day after day, but had feared to attack him, seeing him in the company of our rifles. Day after day they had followed him, unseen by us, but watching his every movement, and knowing well that they would get him separated from us at last.

I could never understand why they had not taken the arrows out of his body, or why he had not been scalped. Probably they had been alarmed in their work, and had fled. He was *only an Indian*, and among the hard men who stood about his dead body, there were few who valued the life of any member of his race at more than a charge of powder. Still we felt sorry as we gathered some stones and brushwood to heap over him. There was no mockery of burial, or any more solemn proceeding than pulling the arrows out of his body (I have them over my chimney-piece now) and riding on our way. Civilisation treads fast on the heels of barbarism here. In another two days we were dancing at a ball in a frontier town, and next day were "interviewed" by the editor of the Grizzly Camp Picayune and Flag; whose only comment on the story was, "And sarved the critter right, sir!"

#### PARISIAN FENCING.

A DISTINGUISHED member of the French Academy asserts that fencing, like conversation, is a national art with his countrymen. To cross swords, he says, is to converse; is it not parrying and thrusting, attacking, above all, *hitting*, if one can? And in this game the tongue is the hard-pushing rival of the foil. In these days

duelling seems to be once more rising into a fashion across the Channel; only the fashion has been transferred to a class very different from that of which those gallants were members, who were wont to cross rapiers in the Bois de Vincennes and the Luxembourg gardens several centuries ago. Lord Lytton tells us that "the pen is mightier than the sword;" and it is certain that in the days of Richelieu duelling was for cavaliers, and not for journalists. Now, we observe that it is the knights of the pen who are most prone to throw it up for the sword. The French editor is sceptical of the superiority of pen over sword, and it is, in these days, quite as necessary that he should be proficient in "the noble art of self-defence," as in the proper use of verbs and nouns, and in the science of hitting hard on paper. Possibly the necessity of sword-learning is the more pressing of the two, for while a slip of the pen may be remedied, a slip of the sword may not unlikely be irremediable. It is certain that the sword is, and always has been, the favourite weapon of the French gentleman; there was an evident vanity in the wearing of it in the old days, and the giving it up as a personal ornament must be one of the gravest indictments of the *ancienne noblesse* against the revolution. So it is that fencing-masters flourish, and become artists, and are the companions of aristocrats, and that fencing schools are institutions as inseparable from Paris as incendiary editorials and revengeful journalists. The French are less bloodthirsty than their trans-Pyrenean neighbours; it is not a *sine quâ non* to kill their adversary; honour is satisfied with somewhat less. So the sword, which often avenges without bloodshed, which punishes, preserving life, by disarming, is a safe and proper weapon. You have only to wander into any French theatre to see how high is the estimation in which the sword, as a weapon, and fencing, as an art, are regarded. A French dramatist asks what would become of his profession without the sword duel? The pistol is only proper to the darkest and blackest tragedies, but the sword is in place everywhere. "A man wounded with a pistol," he argues, "is no longer good for anything. Wounded with a sword, he reappears in a few minutes, hand in waistcoat, trying to smile." And he concludes that the theatre would be nothing without these two indispensable auxiliaries—the sword, and love!

There are few places which would afford more amusement to the thinking foreigner,

who prefers to study men rather than stone, and qualities rather than peristyles, than the Paris fencing schools. Here you meet the men of fashion, the men of the boulevards, downy-lipped aspirants for army commissions, students from the Latin quarter, but above all, ambitious journalists. Access as a spectator is easily obtained, and you may go far and hunt a great deal before finding an exhibition which lets you so far into French characteristics. There are many fencing schools of all grades of fame, price, and accommodation. There are little rooms in darksome quarters where you may learn, after a fashion, for a trifling fee; and there are spacious, elegant saloons, kept by celebrated masters of the art, where the prices are relatively as high as are those of Victor Hugo for his novels, or of Gustave Doré for his illustrations. These saloons are decorated in a fashion appropriate to their use. They have suits of armour along the walls, elaborate collections of rapiers, swords, and sabres crossed athwart each other, pictures of tournaments, duels, and battles. But curious above all are the specimens of human nature which you see there. A fencing saloon is a little theatre where there are quite as many originals as in the best of Sardou's comedies. The *maîtres d'armes*, the awe of youthful beginners, and the admiration of the aptest of their scholars, betray in every look and motion their pride and conceit in their art, and seem to exhibit a sort of independence and bluntness arising from a consciousness that they can maintain their ground against all comers. They are the champion knights of the modern chivalry, and stride about their domain with much the same hauteur of physical prowess which the knights of old used to show. Still, their *amour-propre* is not unamiable; they are burly, gay, "good fellows and brave fellows," devoted heart and soul to their pupils, and especially proud of those who have pinked their man in the wood of Vincennes. They are loquacious, and if you happen to go in when half-a-dozen of the scholars are preparing for their lesson, you will hear the *maître* regaling them with wonderful stories, in which he is always the hero; never having, if you will believe him, been hit with rapier or foil. It is odd to watch the countenances of the pupils as they parry and thrust with *monsieur le maître*.

The best masters use the foils without buttons after the pupil has reached a certain stage of proficiency. Then it is that you may judge of the real quality and

"grit" of the man. Pretending is out of the question when one has the naked foil in his hand. Hypocrisy abandons the coolest. The polite and polished man of the world dissolves before your eyes into the true man of nature, cool or rash, timid or bold, cunning or frank, sincere or subtle. The academician to whom I have referred, relates that one day he fenced with what he regarded as good results to himself. He tells us that he had a bout with a very extensive agent of wines and liqueurs, who, previous to the sport, had offered to furnish him with some excellent wine, which our academician had nearly accepted. The fencing over, the narrator went to the *maître*, and said to him, "I will buy no champagne of this gentleman." "Why?" "His wine must be adulterated; he denies that he was struck!" He applies the principle to prospective sons-in-law. "When a pretender to your daughter's hand presents himself, don't waste your time informing yourself of him, information of this sort being often unreliable; say simply to your future son-in-law, 'Will you have a bout?' At the end of a quarter of an hour you will know more of his character than after six weeks of investigation." The art of fencing, as it is in France, has its antagonistic schools, as well as the arts of painting and letters. Those who practise the art as it was practised half a century ago are called the "old school;" those who follow the system of the "reformers" of fencing, Roussel and Lozé, pride themselves on being the "new school." The admirers of the art imagine that they see in it a revival or reform analogous to that which took place at about the same period in music, painting, and literature. What Rossini and Meyerbeer were in opera, Hugo and St. Beuve in letters, and De la Roche and his contemporaries in painting, Roussel and Lozé were in fencing—founders of a new era. Fencing has had, says a French writer, "its romanticism and its contests of schools." The "old school" of fencing was in harmony with the old manners, the old order of society and régime. Elegance and grace were its requirements and characteristics. It was an ornamental and polite art. Did your life hang in the balance, you must not be awkward.

To be "pinked" was a slight offence compared to falling out of the line of harmony. A blunder was literally worse than death. The very language of the old fencing schools hinted their ideal to be classical and "academic." When one went to take lessons, he went to the "academy." A

fencer could not formerly run in attacking, nor draw back the hand in thrusting, nor stoop, nor bend over, nor engage body with body, nor "take a stroke in rest." That is, in the time of the "old school," it was in verity an art, having as its object the harmonious and elegant. The "new school" is a science, aiming rather to produce a practical effect than an artistic one. To hit is its great purpose. The means were all in all in the old; they are insignificant in the new. The new proposes a real combat rather than a gentlemanly exhibition, and even uncouthness is not tabooed. It permits lying down, putting the head behind the knee, thumping or pounding with the sword, taking aim at the belly, giving strokes beneath; it reduces the whole art to one sole quality—quickness. The "old school" is still professed by many distinguished amateurs of fencing, and still holds its own as the most aristocratic and "gentlemanly" method. The "new school" is resorted to by "young France," and by the journalistic duellist, who usually either means, or would have it appear that he means, serious business. Between the two schools is a third, which aims at a compromise, and at uniting the excellences of both. Of this school, the most renowned of living French fencing masters, Bertrand, was the inventor. He introduced a system of fencing at once regular and rapid, elegant and effective.

All the Paris fencing schools are divided between these three systems. Bertrand, twenty years ago, was facile princeps as maître d'armes, and was perhaps the best fencer whom France has produced within the century. Having now grown too old to conduct a public school, and having long since acquired a substantial income, he has retired from the more active business of his art; but he still retains all his old enthusiasm for it, is professor of arms at the Ecole Polytechnique and at the Collège Rollin, and still has a few pupils in town, among his older friends. He is the Nestor of fencing masters, and at his house in the Routed'Orleans take place choice reunions of amateurs, in which the maître himself does not disdain to have a bout with the more skilful of his guests. The most noted of the present generation of maîtres d'armes are Robert, Pons, Mimiague, and Gâtechair. Of these, Robert is the successor of Bertrand as the illustrator of the method of elegance and rapidity; Gâtechair represents the old school, being showily punctilious, and rigid in rule; Mimiague and Pons repre-

sent the new school, being perhaps more rapid and dexterous than their rivals, and having little regard for the graces: Robert, however, probably holds the highest place.

Some of the fencing halls are very select; that of Pons is a sort of club, to which no man can belong without the assent of a committee. There is another club in the Rue de Choiseul, presided over by Robert, who has more than a hundred scholars. This club is supplied with every luxury and comfort, and its reunions are famous.

### THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS. A YACHTING STORY.

#### CHAPTER XXI. A FATAL MEETING.

HE was full of news. First, the perfect recovery of Miss Panton, who was now bright, sparkling, full of spirits, and happy.

"We all know the physician," he added, significantly, "and I am glad of it now, though I was opposed to it before. I own I thought he was a trifle and philanderer, but now we all see he was in earnest."

"A most proper match," said the doctor, eagerly. "I had Lord Formanton here in this room. Perfect nobleman."

"We won't see the future bridegroom at dinner to-day, though. Conway has got a telegram from home, and the yacht, they say, will sail this very evening." She did not start at this news, as Dudley seemed to expect, though it made her blood run swiftly. "They are going away," he went on, "soon, and I suppose will all meet in London."

"Most proper—most proper," said the doctor. "St. George's, Hanover-square: the right thing, of course."

"Then I have a piece of news that will not please Miss Bailey. That unlucky bridge is down at last, and actually sold into the next county. So ends the great bridge question, and when we look back on all the warmth and excitement, how absurd it seems!—all about an iron bridge. So I said to Miss Panton this morning, but she pointed to the pieces, and said: 'Another victory for me!'"

"Let her take care," said Jessica; "acts of oppression like this cry aloud for judgment, which is sure to come."

"What, pulling down an old bridge?" said Dudley.

"Is the girl mad or a fool?" said the doctor, roughly.

"Oh!" said Dudley, slowly, "Miss Bailey



has reason, good reason, for all this heat. If she were candid enough she would own it."

"But I warn her," said Jessica; "and as you are her friend and champion, I ask you to warn her. I wish her no ill, as I stand here, though this and other steps have been taken to injure me. Take care she be not reckoned with in time, for all her wealth."

Dudley's face was contorted with rage. "Threats to that angel! Upon my word here is an esprit fort. Threaten her because she has been successful in getting wealth and honour, and the liking and love of friends?"

"You judge these things according to your nature," said Jessica, calmly, and rising to go away. "I utter no threats, though I understand the insinuation. Let her reckon with her own conscience for all her treatment of me, beginning so long ago. Only I again warn her, she whose life is so precarious, these things are not allowed to go on without punishment."

"How noble, how generous!" said Dudley, bitterly. "We understand your insinuation, Miss Bailey. But the Almighty does not give us all strong chests and iron blood-vessels."

She did not answer him, but left the room. A version of that scene was over the town before evening; how Miss Bailey had publicly defied her rival through Mr. Dudley, and warned her that she would be punished. Before evening, too, that defiance had reached that very rival.

Jessica was left to think upon this strange news. So Conway was going away, and the familiar image of the pretty yacht, to which the place had grown so accustomed, would be seen no more. Well, indeed, might the doctor utter his unmeant self-benediction, "God bless me!"

This, indeed, would be a relief; it would bring a term, an end to the act, as it were. Once he was gone, *something* would be over; it was like the criminal longing for the day of execution. She herself could not go till he had gone; then she would go, rush out on the world. She dared not think that he would come to say good-bye. Even if he did, she felt she could not see him; but still for him not to make the attempt seemed almost too stoical. But the miserable day wore on and he never came. About three a sailor arrived with a letter.

I am summoned away suddenly. All has

been arranged at Pantton; and I shall go through it all, as you would expect me to do, with honour and loyalty. We must not look back—at least I dare not. . . . Yet remember how solemnly I am bound to you and you to me. From that there can be no escape. Much may happen between; one of the thousand and one chances of the world may turn up. . . . I have told her bluntly—and I should have loathed myself if I had not—how I had been forced so suddenly into this match. She only thinks me the more noble for the confession. Yet still be patient. I have a strange instinct that something must interpose between me and this unworthy, this sinful holocaust. I have been weak, foolish, and culpable; but do not deserve such a fate. Neither have *you* deserved it. I owe you the amende of a life; and as this cannot be paid, I shall find some way. Only wait and hope: wait and hope, at least, until this day two months hence. This is the last letter I may write to you. Dearest, injured Jessica, good-bye.

Often and often she read these words over as the day wore on, and evening approached, and the doctor, in full tenue, drove away to his dinner at the castle. At her window, removed from that blustering influence, she could see the little port below, and a strange fascination made her fasten her eyes upon the yacht lying peacefully there, ill-fated barque, that had brought her such misery and yet such happiness. Even as she watched she saw signs that foreshadowed departure—sails half drooped, ready to spring into position at a word, boats passing to and fro, and rowing round. He was going, sailing away, having accomplished his double work. He had conquered both, and *she*, that other, had conquered her. As she watched, the idea sent a chill to her very heart. As long as that elegant craft reposed there—the first thing she saw in the morning—though all was ended, it still was a symbol, a sign that he was there still. But after this day, that vacant space and lonely harbour. She was, indeed, anxious that she herself was gone, gone out on the world. She had long made her little plan. She had some money in her own right, and there was a good aunt, or elderly cousin—it matters not much which—who was kind and sympathetic, though she was dull and old-fashioned enough, with whom she could live.

She watched until she felt herself oppressed with fluttering anxiety, and then a

strange feeling took possession of her to go out, breathe the air, and wander up some private way, and look at that house which held her rival. The suspense was intolerable. Most probably *he* was up there, exchanging some last good-bye. Bitter, and even despairing, thoughts came on her, of how short-lived, after all, are the most intense dramatic feelings: sure to give way, in a short time, before the prose workings of life.

#### CHAPTER XXII. VICTORY AND DEATH.

It was a quiet evening, very still, and the sun, setting, was leaving great fiery welts and streaks across the sky. The videttes and stragglers of the gaunt firs sprawled their arms against this brilliant background in a very animating fashion. The town was deserted, there being a little fair going on outside St. Arthur's.

Jessica wandered off nearly a mile away to the hill-side, across the river, where lay the castle peeping through the thick planting, the throne, as it were, upon which her cruel and victorious enemy sat. All the country round, the trees, the falling valleys, and gentle hills, the very spot on which she stood, was Laura's; even that noble river, Heaven's free gift to man, she had tried to grasp *that*, and it was actually hers; the fishing, the banks, all that was worth having; only the bare fiction of a legal theory gave the public the use of the water. This thought made her lip curl. "A poor insignificant child, no soul, no wit, or intellect, to be thus endowed; and for a whim, no more, pursue vindictively one who was her superior in everything!" It was hard, too, she was thinking as she sat down on a rustic bench, how these blows came, as it were, in a series. Who could help being stunned? Here she was on the eve of leaving her home, and of going out on the world, having lost beside what might have been her life and happiness. There might have been some interval, surely, something to break the stroke, but such is the cruel dispensation of this life.

Afar off she saw the long windows of the castle all ablaze with soft light, across which shadows flitted occasionally. It must have been one of the "state banquets," in which Mrs. Silvertop revelled, got up to celebrate the grand "conquest" of the daughter of the house, and defeat of the aspiring parson's daughter. "Yes," she said, bitterly, "they will have sent round word to the regular toadies and jackals of

the parish, who will sing in chorus down the table, 'so suitable, so nice, so charming.'" It was a bitter cruel defeat and mortification. But wealth in this world must always win. If she had been tricky, or tried finesse, how easily she could have worsted that poor, contemptible, spoiled child! She had been too scrupulous, and had wrecked her whole life. The other was to be happy, while *she* was to be an outcast. She should be punished—punishment here would be only justice. And it was no harm to pray that it may overtake her for the many wrongs she had done to her.

She walked straight to the bank and found all gone, even the stone piers cleared away, the walks filled up; then turned away hastily. It seemed the emblem of a victory, victory after a long and weary struggle, in which she had carried off so much of the spoil. The sight filled her with grief and anger.

Some minutes passed, when, looking towards the sea, she could make out the mainsail flashing up the mast, and the foresail spreading—signs to her that the sailing was at hand. He was on board, and her heart sank; with this she felt the dear dream was to end, the lights to go out, and she to begin to bear about within her a chilled heart. She turned her eyes away, almost hoping that when next she looked it might be gone. They rested, then, on the castle, where the other sat in triumph.

She was standing sheltered behind a clump of trees, and was so absorbed that she did not hear a light step and rustle. Looking round, she started at seeing a face eagerly looking out and watching the yacht, utterly unconscious that any one was near. This apparition almost stopped the current of her blood. Yet surely this was too hard, too much of a triumph!

Miss Panton was only a few feet away from her, and never stirred. The excitement, and her love, made her look almost beautiful. She was in her dinner dress, a light opera cloak wrapped about her, with flowers in her hair. There was something strange about this apparition among the trees and real flowers, and any looker-on might have fancied that now the Bridge of Sighs was gone, she must have fluttered in some ghostly way across that river.

The eager face was lit up with joy and excitement. She seemed to strain upwards so as to make herself conspicuous to the craft, now so lazily lifting its wings. Next she was waving a handkerchief, and

Jessica started as she heard her say aloud and with delight :

"He sees me! My own *darling*!"

So she watched, and so did the other watch, until the vessel had glided slowly out to sea. Then Laura turned and gave a start of surprise that seemed like one of terror, as she saw Jessica standing before her. There was a silence.

"What have you come here for?" she said, at last. "Was it to see *that*?" And she pointed. "Well, there he sails away! All your watching will never bring him back to you."

Her cheek was pale, her chest panting, and her excitement seemed to grow as she spoke.

"I did you no harm," answered Jessica, slowly, and with a curious bitterness and disdain, "and never meant to do so. You seem to exult that you have striven to separate, to *bribe* from me the only one that I liked, and that liked me!"

The other did not answer for a moment.

"Well, there he sails," said Miss Panton, "bound to me for ever, to return in three weeks to fulfil his engagement. It seems sudden, does it not? but he has told me fairly and nobly that he will strive hard to love and worship me as I deserve. This is the end of your hatred and your plots against me!"

"Yes; you are entitled to some exertion on his side," the other answered, her father's colour rushing to her cheeks. "All this place, those lands, and estates, and that fine castle entitles you to *that*, of right. He told me he would carry out his contract honourably. But with all your lands and castles, I tell you, you have purchased him cheaply!"

Flashes of scarlet came into that pale face, and seemed to flow over her throat. Her lips trembled with nervous anger. "You dare to speak to me in this way—you and your scheming father, whose plots we have detected and seen through! And from whom he escaped. Thank Heaven! his eyes were opened, and by me! I own it. So you persuade yourself that he is forced into this—has sold himself. I wish I had ten times as much to give him." She was growing more and more excited every moment. Jessica lost all restraint. "But did he tell you why he was forced into this step—to give the one he loved up? That it was a *sacrifice* to save his father and family. You know it, and cannot deny it. It is your money that will set the family all straight."

The other was turning as pale as she had been crimson before.

"And after that there is more. What if he had offered to make a solemn oath—which he would fulfil if the opportunity came? But which," she added with scorn, "at this instant I release him from. If ever he was free again, and came to me on his knees with that *amende*, I would not accept it!"

"What is this—what oath? What do you mean? How dare you!" said the other, faintly.

Jessica turned away with triumph. "I have made her feel at last," she thought. "Nothing," she resumed aloud. "You have forced me to say more than I intended. Go your way, and let us never meet, or see each other more."

She received no answer save a faint cry, and looking round saw Miss Panton sinking on a bench, her hand to her side, her handkerchief to her mouth. "Run, and quickly! Help—to the—house!" she gasped faintly. The handkerchief fell from her mouth as she spoke, and Jessica saw with horror there was a streak of blood upon it. "Quick," said the other more faintly. "Cross! cross over. Oh, I shall die!—die here! The boat!—"

Terror-stricken, and scarcely knowing what she did, she turned and rushed toward the river bank, as if to cross by the old familiar bridge. This was but an instinct; and she recollected with a pang that there could be now no means of getting across. What was she to do? Ah, the bridge was gone! There was the castle, the merry diners, the doctor himself among them, appearing only a few hundred yards or so away—in reality more than a mile off. In a sort of agony of despair she tossed her arms wildly to attract the attention of some one at the windows, and then as wildly started off like a deer along the banks of the river. She was so bewildered and horror-stricken, that she had no space to reflect, or think of a plan. The shortest way was the little path along the bank under the trees. She seemed pursued by all the furies of indecision and desperation; for she could only think of that fatal stain on the handkerchief, and that the unhappy girl must die before aid could come—then hurry on, angry with herself for losing precious moments.

With an indefinable terror over her, and ready to sink with agony and fatigue, she at last reached the high road, where the broad three-arch county bridge crossed the river,

and on the other side of which was the great gateway of Panton Castle. She was so exhausted, she had to stop and lean for rest upon the parapet. The sun had already set; there were but a few red embers in the west. Desperately struggling to regain strength for fresh exertion, two minutes more would bring her to the lodge, when, looking up the river, she saw a boat coming out from the bank on the side she had left. She rubbed her eyes. A man rowing, and a white figure lying in the stern. Thank Heaven! It was like a miracle. Some one, no doubt, passing by on the other side, had caught a glimpse of the hapless girl. A few strokes brought them across, and the man was seen to take out the white figure, and carry it up the bank like a child.

With this relief, the half guilty feeling that had oppressed her seemed to pass away, and the sense of old wrongs to return. She remembered, then, that this was a sort of habitual attack to which the girl was subject. Was it not a terrible judgment on that unworthy and unchristian triumph and exultation?

It was now the grey time of the evening: everything was inexpressibly calm. Calm herself now, after the long suspense, the doubt as to what she should do to learn news worked itself up at last to be almost unendurable. She wished at times to set forth up to the castle, and ask what the end was; but an undefined terror, a shadow that took only an indistinct shape, seemed to be cast in her way. As she thought and thought, stray scraps of darkness seemed to gather and gather—recollections of what she had said and done—and take more alarming and firmer shape. She thought she had best wait her father's return. An hour of agony went by. She heard carriage wheels, and rushed out on the top of the stairs. There came no accustomed stamping or vociferating, but his voice low and tremulous. "This is an awful thing to happen!" Then she knew that sentence of death had gone, and that her enemy of the old school days would trouble her and the world no more.

That coarse, selfish soul of the doctor's

had received a real, overwhelming shock, and he sat there in his chair talking almost incoherently. "Where are we? What does it mean? Oh, Jessica, I saw the poor, poor thing brought in, and laid down, and the—the blood pouring out. It was he—he did it. Oh, how cruel!"

"He! Who, who?" said Jessica, frantically.

"Conway. She left us after dinner to make signals to his vessel. Her poor tender soul was wrapped up in him. The agitation was too much for her. She might have lain there nearly half an hour—and no one with her. Her foot caught in the grass, and her forehead all cut with the fall. Heavens, what a life it is!"

Lain there half an hour. Why did not Jessica say *then* how she had flown for aid, but a strange indecision sealed her lips. *He* could not understand; and then, full of grief and pity for the miserable girl, she felt she had done no wrong, and disdained to expose herself to the talk of the miserable gossips of the place, and to the unscrupulous enmity of Dudley, when there was no necessity.

Well, indeed, might Conway have named that fatal bridge the Bridge of Sighs. It seemed like Nemesis. The yacht, bending to the breeze, as if in an impetuous gallop, sped on her course, her owner thinking wearily of his new and splendid bondage, and little thinking that he was now free.

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